

New STEM Solicitation for Adult Education

The National Science Foundation (NSF) recently announced the release of its new *Advancing Informal STEM Learning (AISL) Program Solicitation* (12-560). It invites applications that propose opportunities for innovative, field-advancing informal and emerging STEM learning environments. **This solicitation may be of particular interest to providers and potential applicants in adult education.** NSF has provided support in the past for STEM projects such as the [TV411](#) and [Teachers Investigating Adult Numeracy](#) projects. [Preliminary proposals for AISL](#) are due Aug. 14, 2012 (by 5 p.m. proposer's local time). NSF strongly suggests that proposers new to the field and those with new concepts submit preliminary proposals. Full proposals are due Jan. 14, 2013 (by 5 p.m. proposer's local time). Those wanting more information may access NSF's Division of Research on Learning in Formal and Informal Settings and the Center for Advancement of Informal Science Education.

Pay for Success Pilot Grants Announced

The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration recently announced the availability of approximately \$20 million in [Pay for Success \(PFS\) Pilot Project grants](#), funded out of the [Workforce Innovation Fund](#). The fund supports approaches to designing and delivering employment and training services that generate long-term improvements in the performance of the public workforce system. PFS is designed to address the systemic problems facing vulnerable populations through investing financially in innovative prevention approaches and service models. Vulnerable populations may include low-wage and less-skilled workers, as well as youths, ex-offenders, individuals with disabilities, and other economically and educationally disadvantaged persons. Preventative services include helping students who are at risk of dropping out to complete high school and/or post-secondary education or training, and giving ex-offenders alternatives to recidivism. **Adult education providers offering preventative services to the targeted populations are encouraged to access the [Workforce Innovation Fund](#) and [Pay for Success](#) for more detailed information.** Applications must be received by Dec. 11, 2012 by 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

Funding Available to Train and Place Transit Workers

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood recently announced the availability of \$5 million from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for programs that provide career development for transit workers, as well as training and placement for those seeking jobs in the transit industry. The purpose of FTA's [Innovative Transit Workforce Development Program](#) is to build a well-trained workforce essential to the continued safety and reliability of the nation's transit systems. Applicants for this program may be public transit providers or institutions of higher education and nonprofit organizations in partnership with a public transit provider. Applications are due by **July 6, 2012.**

CTE Innovation: Career Academies

President Obama's 2013 budget request, as well as the [Blueprint for An America Built to Last](#) and [Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education](#), propose the establishment of more high-quality career academies across the country. The request for the academies is \$1 billion over three years with \$200 million designated for FY 2013.

Career academies have shown success in integrating academically rigorous curricula into career-related education programs. Outcomes have included reductions in high school drop-out rates and students prepared to participate in the knowledge-based, global marketplace of the 21st century. Career academies often are structured as small learning communities within larger, traditional schools and provide alternatives to the regular high school curriculum. Their purpose is to make education more relevant to high school students through personalized and contextual learning while preparing them for careers and postsecondary education. Through this proposed initiative, states would award competitive grants to partnerships of school districts and local employers, with the goal of creating 3,000 new career academies and increasing the number of students served by 50-percent.

Four key goals drive the proposed initiative:

1. To increase student achievement and reduce drop-out rates. This may require a more challenging curriculum, rather than one that is simplified, because boredom is sometimes significant factor in the reasons why students drop out. Career academies are designed to make a rigorous curriculum more relevant to students' interests and provide work-based learning opportunities that keep students engaged in school.
2. To align on-the-job and postsecondary training opportunities, thereby facilitating student progress. Dual enrollment and dual credit systems enable students to obtain industry and postsecondary credentials sooner and with less student debt.
3. To help industries hire American workers by preparing American graduates for positions that are currently being filled by recruiting workers from foreign labor pools. Many American industries have more openings than are being filled by American graduates. Career academies linked with strong industry partnerships can help close this gap.
4. To improve the earning prospects of American students by preparing them more effectively for the workforce of the twenty-first century. Twenty-first century jobs are projected to demand more education as time goes on, especially for high-wage, high-demand jobs.